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SUBJECT: GHANA ELECTIONS: HEADING FOR A RUNOFF DECEMBER 28

11. (U) The Electoral Commission has announced that Ghana's next president will be determined by a runoff election on December 28. EC Chairman Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan announced the results of the December 7 Presidential race at a December 10 press conference. With all 230 constituencies reporting, the New Patriotic Party candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo leads with 49.05%, with John Atta Mills of the National Democratic Congress following with 47.96%. Based on Mission observations of the election process, including observer teams in all regions of the country, and input from international and diplomatic missions, Embassy Accra believes that thus far the election met standards for free, fair and transparent polling.

12. (U). International observers, including the Carter Center, the European Union and ECOWAS have issued statements commending the EC for a credible job of conducting elections that have, up to this time, met recognized standards. POLOFFS have met with representatives of other diplomatic missions which fielded observer teams, including Australia, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, and the UK, all of whom found the election process to be credible and without significant difficulties.

13. (U) While the US Mission had urged Washington to hold off on comments regarding the nature of the election, we feel that it is now safe to announce that the first round of elections was free, fair and transparent. There are still a few disputed constituencies that will have to be resolved through the High Court in the upcoming weeks, but those do not in any way cast doubt on the overall conduct of the election, which has reflected the will of the Ghanaian people. The Electoral Commission should be commended for its work.

14. (U) Two hours after the EC announced its results, the US Mission-sponsored Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) announced the results of its Parallel Vote Tally (PVT), which was uncannily close to the final result announced by the EC. They had forecast 49.8 percent for Akufo-Addo (actual 49.1), 47.4 percent for Atta-Mills (actual 47.9), and 1.4 percent for the Convention Peoples Party candidate Papa Kwesi Nduom (his exact count). Their results add a welcome shot of credibility to the EC's announcement.

15. (U) Pressure and tension will inevitably rise when campaigning gets back under way as we count down to the December 28 runoff. Both parties can be expected to pull out all of the stops in an effort to get out the vote. The country has now had a good dress rehearsal, but it was spared the trauma of a final outcome. The performance of the EC, security forces, and the media should have instilled some confidence in the Ghanaian populace, and we expect peace once again to prevail. Next time around, however, there will be a loser, and we already know that a large percentage of voters will share in that loss. How they cope with their grief will be the true test of Ghanaian democracy.

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